

Scheduling Community Mental Health Assessment in Devon



Simon Polak, former Business & Information Systems Manager at Devon Partnership Trust, who developed the project with PenCHORD believes the benefits are wide-ranging: “The whole process has increased choice for patients. Anyone working in operational delivery in the NHS should think about using PenCHORD to understand how their organisation works. You can always derive new benefits and the ability to model without having to try something out on patients is invaluable.”

PenCLAHRC's Operational Research team PenCHORD, teamed up with the Devon Partnership Trust to assist them with implementing a new system that would dramatically reduce waiting times for mental health assessments.

The Trust's mental health services are delivered at several specialist assessment centres across Devon. Recognising the opportunity to improve this service, the Trust wanted to introduce a centralised 'Choose and Book' system – allowing patients to select the location they are referred to for an outpatient appointment.

Making changes that are based on evidence can be difficult in the real world, where subtle differences between systems mean, what works in one situation may not succeed in another. Before launching the new system, the Trust approached PenCHORD to use the latest techniques in computer modelling to help them validate and improve the proposed new system before it was officially rolled out.

What Happened Next?

PenCHORD created a detailed simulation of the referral and assessment pathway, allowing the Trust to evaluate the 'Choose and Book' system before it was implemented.

The model helped the team to assess the likely demand at each centre, predict the number of appointment slots needed, and determine the best location for each site. This analysis also proved that a type of queue-sharing model – where patients can choose to attend one from several of their closest centres, would reduce waiting times significantly.

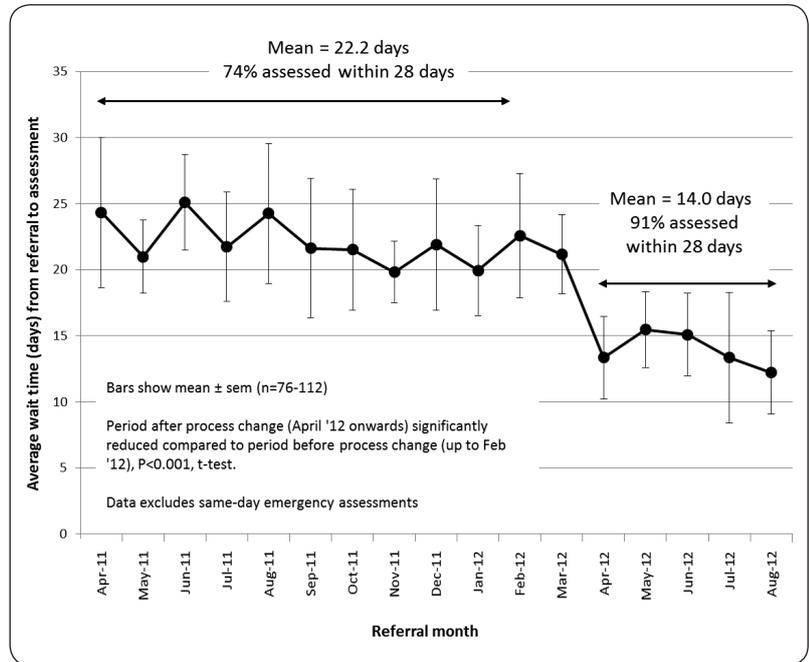
After testing the processes in the virtual world, the Trust was able to confidently implement the new system to great effect. Thanks to the PenCHORD team being able to better match capacity to local demand, and advise on use of queue-sharing, the average wait time for an appointment in the pilot area fell from 22 days to 14.

References:

Pitt, M., Monks, T. & Allen, M. (2015). Systems modeling for improving healthcare. In *Complex Interventions in Health. An Overview of Research Methods*, Edited by David Richards & Ingalill Rahm Hallberg. pp 312-325

For further information visit:

www.clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk



Useful Links:

penclahrc.exposure.co/evidence-based-design

clahrc-peninsula.nihr.ac.uk/research/penchord-scheduling-community-mental-health-assessment-in-devon

Acknowledgement:

This research was joint funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care South West Peninsula (PenCLAHRC) and the National Institute for Health Research Public Health Research Programme (project number 10/3006/07). The views expressed are those of the author(s) and not necessarily those of the NHS, the NIHR or the Department of Health. View more BITEs at www.clahrcpp.co.uk

